



Washington Office of Superintendent of **PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

Beginning Educator Support Program

1. **Purpose:**

The purpose of the Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program is to:

- Attract, train, and retain skillful novice teachers in Washington's public schools who promote educational equity to positively impact student learning;
- Support novice educators to promote equitable learning in the classrooms;
- Develop mentors who can foster student-centered, equitable classroom practices;
- Build systems of support within school districts to hold a collective sense of responsibility for the success of beginning teachers and the students in their classrooms.

2. **Description of services provided:**

BEST supports and promotes strategies for improving districts' efforts to attract, train, and retain highly skilled novice teachers who promote equitable learning that positively impacts their students' learning.

In 2019-2020, BEST funded 189 districts serving approximately 2,011 Year 1 teachers and 2,542 Year 2 teachers. Grantees included 8 ESD consortia and 2 district consortia. These districts and regional consortia were tasked with implementing the following research-based program components to support each novice educator:

- Assignment of a carefully selected, well-trained mentor;
- Instructional orientation prior to the start of teaching;
- Professional development designed specifically for beginning teachers;
- Opportunities for beginning teachers to be observed and receive non-evaluative feedback on instruction;
- Support with the teacher evaluation system and use of the district's instructional framework;
- Special attention to the needs of novice teachers in under-performing schools; and
- Formation of a stakeholders' team.

In addition, BEST asked districts to attend to specific areas that impact student learning when neglected by providing:

- Enhanced, coordinated support for teachers of special education that addressed their complex role as teacher, case manager for students, and lead

for other adults in their buildings.

- Intensive support for teachers with limited certificates who had not yet completed a teacher preparation program.
- Mitigation of the impact of extra-challenging placements on first-year teachers and their students.

Of the \$10.5 million allocated for FY 20, \$900,000 funded BEST staffing and work around the state.

- **OSPI Mentor Academies** provided high quality professional development for instructional mentors, coaches, and other teacher leaders focused on the specific knowledge and skills necessary to accelerate new teachers' instructional effectiveness in their classrooms. BEST provided five academies specifically for mentors supporting teachers of special education, eight academies focused on mentoring for racial equity, and three academies for mentors supporting language development teachers. Approximately 1700 mentors, coaches, and administrators attended 35 academies during the year.

Once school buildings closed, BEST converted academies to be delivered online in order to continue to provide training and to help mentors adapt to supporting novice teachers in leading remote learning. Between March and June 2020, BEST hosted 12 academies online. Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive.

- **Regional Mentor Roundtables** continued the growth of mentors and instructional coaches through opportunities to learn, practice their skills, explore problems of practice, and network with other mentors. Regional roundtables were offered at 20 locations around the state, meeting monthly. A pilot mentor roundtable focused on mentoring teachers of special education will continue into FY21. After buildings closed, facilitators quickly converted to an online format and added additional sessions to increase support for mentors around mentoring remotely.
- **Support for In-District Mentor Roundtables** through monthly Zoom meetings provided facilitators with content and strategies to support their planning. This had the added benefit of increasing contact between BEST program staff and district leadership for collaboration and problem solving.
- **Induction Coaching** for each BEST grantee provided technical assistance and personalized support for districts to continue refining their comprehensive induction programs.
- **Regional Induction Leader Roundtables**, open to all districts to build understanding of comprehensive induction, provided opportunities for collaboration, sharing induction practices, and networking. Prior to COVID closures, these were offered at seven locations around the state.
- **Online Induction Leader Collaboration** open to all districts to help them

plan for possibility of delivering new-teacher orientation remotely in August.

- **Induction Development Grants** In collaboration with TPEP, eight districts and PSESD were given 1-year grants to fund training and some initial induction work including mentor training and mentoring. These grantees had full access to supports provided by BEST to other grantees and were invited to apply for BEST grants in FY 21.

3. **Criteria for receiving services and/or grants:**

The competitive BEST Grants were awarded to districts and consortia who demonstrated a need, particularly in under-performing schools; on-going commitment to developing comprehensive induction; and leadership to accomplish the work.

To qualify for continuing with BEST grant funding, districts committed to providing the following:

- **A well-trained, carefully selected mentor** who will provide an average of 1-2 hours per week for Year 1 teachers for planning and reflection conferences, observations, and feedback;
- **An instructional orientation** with compensation for time prior to the start of school to acquaint them with district and school expectations and culture; orient them to preferred instructional practices and curriculum; and help them plan for their first day, weeks, and month with students;
- **A classroom set-up visit** prior to the start of school or the start of the new educator's assignment in which a mentor meets with the new educator to assist with classroom set-up and plans for the first days with students;
- **On-going professional learning for beginning educators** designed to meet their unique needs throughout the first year. Professional learning is aligned to the Washington State 8 Teacher Evaluation Criteria (or other professional standards when relevant) and the districts adopted instructional framework.
- **Formative observations with feedback** for mentees provided at least monthly by released mentors and a minimum of four times per year by colleague mentors;
- **Release time for new teachers to observe** accomplished teaching while accompanied by their mentor or other instructional leader;
- **Job description and compensation for mentors** of early career educators for required activities that fall outside the mentor's regular job responsibilities such as attending mentor roundtables, after-school meetings, and summer trainings;
- **Initial professional learning for mentors**, including completion of the 3-day OSPI Mentor Academy 101 (preferably before the initial year of mentoring and no later than December of that year);

- **Ongoing professional learning for mentors** to build capacity in components of the *WA State Standards for Mentoring*. Mentors should participate regularly in roundtables which may be hosted by OSPI, regional ESDs, regional consortia, and/or school districts. OSPI will provide Mentor Roundtable facilitator training and will coordinate a statewide communications network to support the work of roundtables and their membership;
- **Special attention to the needs of early-career educators in comprehensive schools** and/or working with students facing the greatest challenges;
- **Stakeholders' Team** to meet at least 3 times per year in order to examine the current state of comprehensive new educator induction, gather and review data, problem-solve, and set goals. In order to build a sense of collective responsibility, members should represent multiple groups across the district;
- **BEST Grantee Convening** attendance; and
- **ESD Consortium Leads** committed to build the capacity of individual districts to create comprehensive induction programs.

Beneficiaries in 2019-20 School Year:

Number of School Districts:	189
Number of Schools:	<i>Enter total number of schools</i>
Number of Students:	<i>Enter total number of students</i>
Number of Educators:	2,011 Year 1 and 2,542 Year 2 teachers
Other: <i>Name other...</i>	8 Educational Service Districts

Number of OSPI staff associated with this funding (FTEs): 3.33 FTE

Number of contractors/other staff associated with this funding: 48

Contractors

FY20 Funding: State Appropriation:	\$10.5 million
Federal Appropriation:	\$0
Other fund sources:	\$0
TOTAL (FY20)	\$10.5 million

4. **Are federal or other funds contingent on state funding?**

No

Yes, please explain.

If state funds are not available, the state will not be eligible...

5. **State funding history:**

Fiscal Year	Amount Funded	Actual Expenditures
FY20	\$10,500,000	\$10,163,330
FY19	\$10,500,000	\$10,288,704
FY18	\$10,500,000	\$10,383,282
FY17	\$9,000,000	\$8,883,245
FY16	\$5,500,000	\$5,327,162
FY15	\$3,000,000	\$2,915,211
FY14	\$1,000,000	\$957,888
FY13	\$1,000,000	\$986,846
FY12	\$1,000,000	\$961,240
FY11	\$1,800,000	\$987,700
FY10	\$2,348,000	\$2,266,227

6. **Number of beneficiaries (e.g., school districts, schools, students, educators, other) history:**

Fiscal Year	Districts Funded within Consortia	Total Districts Funded
FY20	126	191
FY19	115	182
FY18	94	162
FY17	73	131
FY16	33	69
FY15	26	39
FY14	0	7
FY13	17	19
FY12	26	28
FY11	11	14
FY10	27	30

7. **Programmatic changes since inception (if any):**

New teacher induction in Washington school districts is an issue of equity of access for students. OSPI’s “Washington State’s Ensuring Equitable Access of Excellent Educator Initiative State Plan” provides significant data showing that many of our underserved students are inequitably taught by less-experienced teachers. Funding comprehensive induction is part of the way to close the opportunity gap for our students.

BEST took several steps this year to continue to move toward that goal. The *WA State Standards for Mentoring* were revised to center equity in the standards and mentoring

work. BEST pivoted to provide all supports (induction coaching, Mentor Academies, and Mentor Roundtables) online and to respond to immediate needs raised by districts.

With a steady increase in the number of new teachers since 1987, and an appropriation that remained constant, the amount allocated per new teacher declined. The allocation for 2008-09 was \$880 per new teacher, insufficient for districts to carry out the directives of the TAP legislation, let alone offer quality induction programs that include research-identified components for effectiveness. Magnified by the 20-year impact of the increased cost of living, the result was that some districts, unable to afford to meet the RCW criteria, did not even apply for funding. Many more districts were forced to supplement the state allocation from other unstable federal, state, and local funding sources (e.g. Title I, Title II, I-728, local levy funds, etc.) in order to provide effective programs. Still other districts cobbled together programs which fell short of the level of support that research indicates can make a difference in improving both teacher retention and student achievement (Strong, 2005; Villars and Strong, 2005 and 2007).

Recognizing these issues, the legislature provided funding for beginning educator support to develop and implement BEST in FY 2010. With the same level of previous TAP funding, OSPI's Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST) program was directed to provide comprehensive induction and mentoring programs in "five to fifteen districts and/or regional consortia" (ESSB 6444) through a competitive grant process. Support for first, second, and third-year teachers and assistance to candidates for Professional Certification was initially funded in grantee districts. During the 2010 legislative session, BEST funding was reduced from \$2.348 million to \$2 million, which necessitated the elimination of district support for third-year teachers and assistance to ProTeach candidates. In October 2010, across-the-board state cuts further reduced BEST funding to \$1.88 million which impacted the ability of grantee districts to fully address all required program components. With the piloting and implementation of the statewide Teacher/Principal Evaluation system in 2012, BEST funding continued to focus on first and second-year teachers and began focusing on provisional status teachers with a new teaching assignment. FY 2013 and 2014 funding continued at the reduced level of \$1 million.

In 2013-14, BEST provided two-year pilot grants to seven districts across Washington. Those districts served 220 first year teachers and enhanced the expertise of their mentors. The Legislature added \$2 million in additional funds for the 2014-15 school year, making possible support for 32 more districts and a total of 1347 early-career teachers. This represented less than 60% of the approximately 2300 first-year teachers hired in Washington annually.

The Legislature funded BEST at \$5.5 million for 2015-2016, which allowed expansion to additional districts as well as expanded funding of Year 2 teachers and a pilot project to provide mentor support for Year 1 ESAs in selected districts. In 2016-2017, Legislature added an additional \$3.5 million, making the support of an additional 62 districts and 1,315 first and second-year teachers possible.

The 2018 budget funded BEST at \$10.5 million, again allowing the program to expand. An additional 31 districts and 1,085 first and second-year teachers were added to the program. With each year participating in the program, districts further develop their systemic support for their novice teachers.

Although funding did not increase in FY19, the scope of BEST's work did. An additional 20 districts, 200 Year 1 teachers, and 500 Year 2 teachers received support through BEST funds. The number of contractors, academies, and other supports were also increased to meet demand. With the increase in number of teachers, BEST was unable to fully fund 21% of districts according to the per teacher rates set by BEST. Districts attempted to fill the short-fall with TPEP or other funds.

Significant increases in teacher salaries for FY20 resulted in tightening budgets in many districts and a decrease in the number of new teachers hired (approximately 900 fewer Y1 teachers compared to FY19). With fewer Year 1 teachers, BEST closed the previous year's funding gap and provided much-needed enhanced funding to increase support for novice teachers of special education and novice teachers with limited certificates.

8. **Evaluations of program/major findings:**

Findings by BEST about induction in the state include these:

Funding

- Grantees continued to use BEST funding to refine and extend their work to attract, train, and retain skillful practitioners. However, BEST cannot fully fund current induction work. Districts report using funds from TPEP 664 (66%), Title IIa (56%), and the general fund (54%) to supplement BEST funding.
- Seven of the eight districts offered 1-year Induction Development Grants opted to apply for a full BEST grant.
- Districts continued to rely on released mentors (77%) for the majority of mentoring of Year 1 teachers. Districts in ESD consortia were more likely to use colleague mentors (56%). Released mentoring is a more expensive model that usually allows for more mentor-mentee interaction.
- Approximately 78% of districts requested additional funds to support Educational Staff Associates (ESAs- nurses, counselors, and librarians) if it was available for FY20. Districts also expressed interest in funding support for PTs, OTs, psychologists, and speech/language pathologists.

Retention

- Districts retained approximately 91% of their Year 1 and Year 2 teachers of special education. Grantees are more often using special education specific mentors, increasing technical support, and coordinating efforts across departments. Nationally, retention of all teachers of special education is approximately 75% per year.
- Districts continue to improve support for teachers holding limited certificates. Grantees retained approximately 84% of teachers with limited certificates. Federal Way School District, with 90 limited certificate teachers, retained 93% through ongoing coordination and collaboration between the mentor team, district induction leadership, and alternative route to certification program staff. Pasco School District, with 42 teachers with limited certificates, retained 95%.

Other BEST Findings

- Districts value the on-going support provided by BEST through mentor professional learning, induction coaching, and on-going guidance. (Example: A superintendent in a rural, remote district has nearly all teachers participate in their in-district mentor roundtable because it builds their skills to focus on and talk about teaching and learning more effectively.) Grantees missed the learning and collaboration that usually happen at the annual BEST Grantee Convening in March, cancelled due to COVID. It will be important to return to this learning for March 2021 via a virtual conference.
- Educational Service District consortium leaders connect initiatives such as the Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program (TPEP) and the Office of Systems and School Improvement (OSSI), increasing the impact and improving systemic thinking at the district level.
- Some districts are growing efforts to better support their teachers of color and to provide mentors of color. Seattle School District provides teachers of color the option of having a mentor of color. There is still much work to do to ensure equitable access for students and equitable classroom and school environments for students and teachers of color.
- Induction Development Grants allowed for initial training and support in applying for grants which led to faster and more effective start-up efforts by districts.

9. Major challenges faced by the program:

- BEST funding generally has not been enough to fund induction for Educational Staff Associates (ESAs—counselors, nurses, occupational therapists, physical therapists, psychologists, etc.), roles that are essential to supporting vulnerable students and closing opportunity gaps. Districts continue to request this support.
- Districts consistently report challenges in providing robust Year 2 (Y2) support for

teachers. Unstable and low funding (\$750 - \$1000/Y2 teacher) is a strong contributing factor.

- The number of teachers with limited certificates continues to be nearly 25% of Year 1 teachers in BEST districts. These teachers often need more intensive support than their fully-certificated colleagues, and some need continued intensive support into their second year of teaching.
- Teachers of special education represented approximately 17% of Year 1 teachers in BEST districts in FY20. Teachers in these assignments have complex roles that need increased, coordinated support from multiple departments in ways that traditional classroom teachers do not.
- Small districts with just a few new teachers struggle to provide robust support for singleton teachers.
- Recruiting released mentors when positions cannot be guaranteed beyond a single year is difficult. A year-to-year funding model creates uncertainty and teachers are often hesitant to risk giving up a guaranteed teaching position for a mentoring job that may go away after a year if funding is cut.
- Agency compensation cannot compete with school district compensation, which makes recruiting and retaining program staff challenging. One of the two BEST program staff left BEST in September 2019 after being recruited by a school district that was able to offer an 80% increase in salary. BEST opted to leave the position unfilled until spring when more educators are likely to be changing positions.

10. **Future opportunities:**

- Use the new equity-focused *Standards for Mentoring* to guide mentor professional learning and growth focused on equitable practices for mentors and novice teachers.
- Continue to build mentors' capacity to identify and address patterns of racial inequity in classrooms and to help novice teachers foster equitable classroom environments
- Continue to collaborate with partners focused on attracting, training, and retaining teachers of color. This includes partnering with other groups already engaged in this work.
- Extend support to teachers who often have students facing greater challenges by enhancing funding for teachers of special education, enhancing funding for teachers with limited certificates, and providing support for educational staff associates (ESAs—school counselors, nurses, OT, PT, etc.)
- Provide 1-year Induction Development Grants to help districts learn about and begin to engage in comprehensive induction work for a year before scaling up work.
- Support districts to use newly-revised Student Growth Goal guidance to strengthen their support for Year 2 teachers.

- Continue to expand BEST support to all 295 districts in the state, from the 187 districts being served in 2020-2021.

11. **Statutory and/or budget language:**

Budget Proviso: ESSB 6168 Section 513(2)(e) - \$10,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2020 and \$10,500,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2021 are provided solely for a beginning educator support program. The program shall prioritize first year educators in the mentoring program. School districts and/or regional consortia may apply for grant funding. The program provided by a district and/or regional consortia shall include: A paid orientation; assignment of a qualified mentor; development of a professional growth plan for each beginning teacher aligned with professional certification; release time for mentors and new educators to work together; and educator observation time with accomplished peers. Funding may be used to provide statewide professional development opportunities for mentors and beginning educators.

12. **Other relevant information:**

Support from BEST available to all 295 school districts in Washington:

- Mentor Academies and Mentor Roundtables for mentors, instructional coaches, teacher leaders, and administrators;
- Annual Mentor-Coach Equity in Action conference;
- Induction Leadership Collaborations provided monthly
- Assistance from the BEST Program staff in designing and improving district induction work.

13. **Schools/districts receiving assistance:**

See [OSPI's Grantee List](#)

14. **Program Contact Information:**

Name: Sue Anderson

Title: Director, Educator Effectiveness

Phone: 360-725-6116

Email: sue.anderson@k12.wa.us

Name: Marcy Yoshida

Title: Program Lead, BEST

Phone: 360-725-6430

Email: marcy.yoshida@k12.wa.us

Name: Kati Casto

Title: Program Supervisor, BEST

Phone: 360-725-6430

Email: kati.cast@k12.wa.us